

Hon. Lewis A. Kaplan
Daniel Patrick Moynihan
United States Courthouse
500 Pearl St.
New York, NY 10007-1312 - -

Edward Dodds:
Dear Judge Kaplan:

Through the effective altruism community we share, it has been my privilege to know Mr. Sam Bankman-Fried for a number of years and call him friend. I hope to provide insight into Sam's character, his contributions to society, and the unique, perhaps bizarre context in which I have to come to understand and appreciate his exceptional integrity, genuine personality, and moral standing. He has consistently displayed unwavering dedication to an authentic, almost obsessive and perhaps unhealthy self-sacrificial commitment to not only making a positive impact on the world, but indeed saving humanity from a very grave threat.

Sam first came to my attention in 2012 via his blog Measuring Shadows, where he wrote inspirational articles about ethics and quantifying positive impact. Two years earlier, while I was in high school, I had joined a critical thinking community on the rationality forum LessWrong that would come to be known as effective altruism (or EA), and 20-year-old Sam's posts on animal welfare, reducing global poverty and decreasing extinction risk left an impression; here was an extremely intelligent young man who thought soberly and seriously about ethical issues. Quantitative, geeky, Sam was not afraid to talk about moral issues in a refreshing way, attempting to calculate, for example, how many lives could be saved via screening political candidates for dedication to pandemic prevention (which Sam and I considered a neglected area of concern) and donating to their campaigns long before COVID-19 and FTX; nearly a decade later, I worked alongside his brother Gabe on exactly that, thanks to generous funding from Sam Bankman-Fried.

To understand Sam's ethical commitments, one must understand the environment we both shared. The average member of our community was aged 25; we were all incredibly young, but put a bunch of bright geeks together with machine learning professors and physicists and they end up figuring a thing or two out, and guided by thinkers such as Max Tegmark of MIT, we had come to the unsettling conclusion that a type of artificial intelligence called Artificial General Intelligence posed an urgent and credible threat to humanity.

At the time, this position was considered fringe; now, betting market Metaculus predicts Artificial General Intelligence to be realised by 2026; multiple AI laboratories such as OpenAI have publicly stated their goal is to create Artificial General Intelligence, with CEO Sam Altman predicting this to be achieved by 2030; 1,500 professors have signed open letters warning of the danger and 88% of AI researchers believe AI poses an extinction risk to the species, with estimates of extinction probability (ranging from 15%, such as that espoused by "optimist" Lina M. Khan, Chairperson of the Federal Trade Commission, to 95%, espoused by the founder of the AI safety field, Eliezer Yudkowsky of the Machine Intelligence Research Institute) discussed in recent Senate hearings and informing President Biden's recent Executive Order mandating monitoring for AI systems that supersede "compute thresholds."

A bunch of kids were staring down a barrel at imminent extinction, and felt the grownups in the room did not (yet) understand the danger, and decided to take matters into their own hands. Sam resolved to make as much money as possible, and give it away to these cause areas.

The newfound societal and governmental awareness of AI extinction risk, and the creation and growth of multiple AI safety organisations, would not be possible without Sam Bankman-Fried, who pledged over \$1 billion to pandemic prevention and AI safety, donating hundreds of millions (superseding Open Philanthropy's expectations and generating uproar in the AI safety community about spending money too quickly!) to these projects with, so to speak, hours left on the clock to midnight. Over the course of a remarkable period of 18 months no young, first-time entrepreneur in his 20s could possibly hope to handle (for this is truly without historical precedent), Sam's net worth shot to over \$30 billion, and despite his ADHD, lack of experience and tremendous stress, he moved with immediate urgency to put his money where he thought it would have the greatest chance of not only helping others in dire need today, but preventing an AI catastrophe.

I have known Sam to be as diligent a young man can be expected to be in such circumstances, consulting lawyers on the legality of moves he wanted to make, researching and figuring out the law in an unregulated, emergent field like cryptocurrency, building this insane plane while it was flying and patching flaws in his cryptocurrency exchange with metaphorical duct tape to prevent speculators from incurring massive losses due to glitches in the risk engine. Something clearly went very wrong at some point. But I think that after having some proper mental space for reflection after the breakneck madness of the past few years, he will be in a healthy place to reconsider his actions. I firmly believe that he is extremely remorseful; he just doesn't express it the way most people do. I think even if the jury's verdict had been innocent on all counts, the guilt of all the damage he's caused would gnaw away at him for many years and I can't imagine how much it will consume him in prison without the distractions of the outside world.

Sam took great personal and professional risk to do good for the world in starting a company, and never wavered from his commitments to ethical conduct; to this day, despite present circumstances, I cite Sam Bankman-Fried as an unblemished hero, and repeatedly encourage my friends to imitate his character and example. His is an unusual character, and maybe his mathy brain might not strike the average observer as naturally sympathetic, but I have no doubt that this is a good man who deserves a second glance and a second chance, who has never been motivated by self-enrichment or fame, who has never demonstrated to me the slightest propensity for criminal behaviour or intentionally unethical conduct, who has always been a delightfully strange young man motivated purely by doing good for the world, doing kindnesses to strangers, and decreasing extinction risk to humanity as quickly and effectively as possible.

Yours Sincerely,

